MAGNIFY YOUR PROJECT'S IMPACT

How to Incorporate Child-Level M&E in Economic Development

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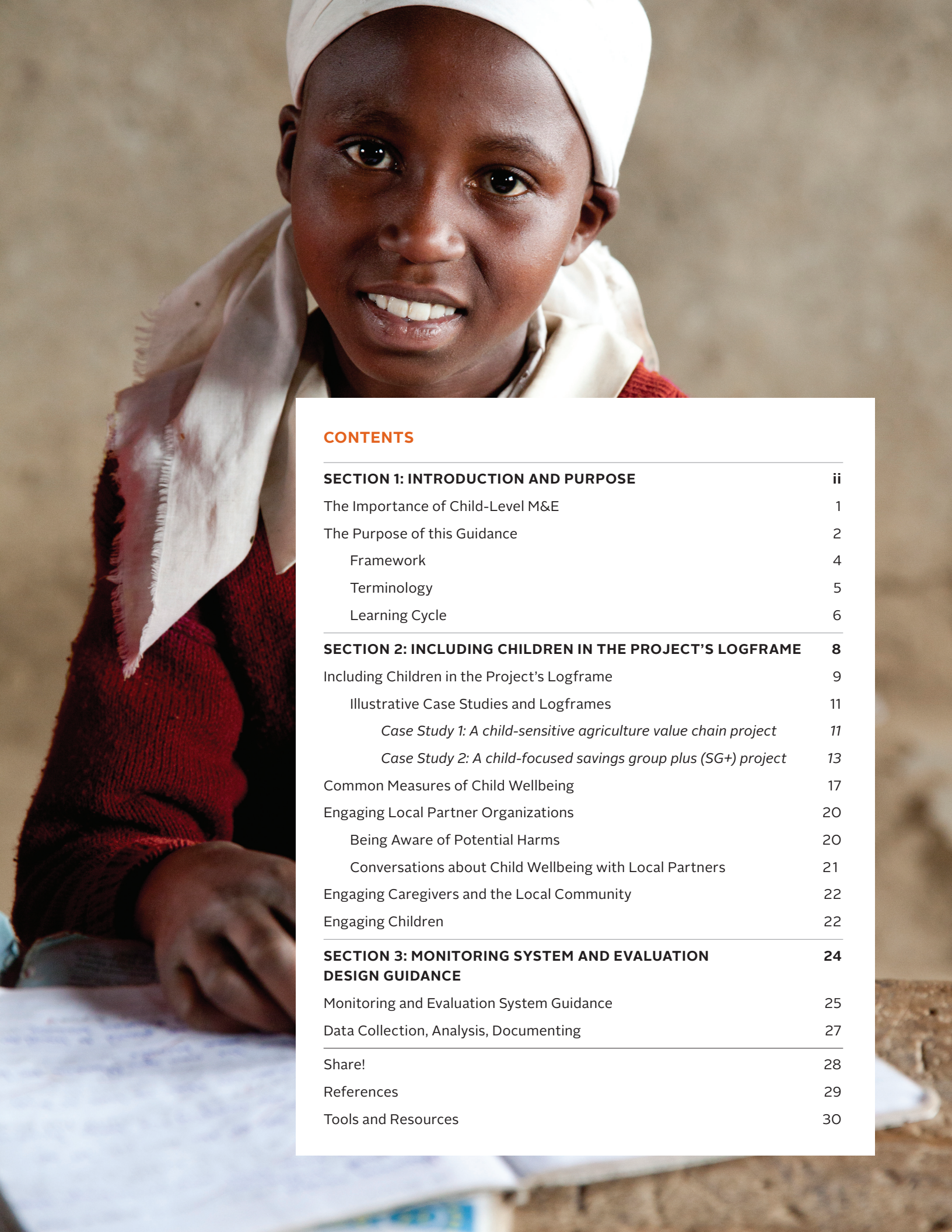
Supporting Transformation by Reducing Insecurity and Vulnerability with Economic Strengthening (STRIVE)

www.seepnetwork.org/strive

An associate award under the FIELD-Support LWA, STRIVE aims to understand if improvements in economic wellbeing of households translate into child-level impacts. The purpose of STRIVE's learning agenda is to understand if and how much improvement happens, as well as the causal pathways to changes in child wellbeing.

Photography: Diana Rutherford, Jessica Scranton and Shehab Uddin\DRIK



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Introduction and Purpose

The Importance of Child-Level M&E

A common assumption in economic development is that, at least at large scale and over long time periods, "a rising tide lifts all boats." Practitioners, researchers and donors have become increasingly aware, though, that gains are unevenly distributed. We know this to be the case at the macro level, and a growing body of research and observation has captured it happening at the micro level, within households (Alderman et al., 1995; Doss, 2011). For instance, there is a documented correlation between household economic status and child wellbeing (Sinclair et al., 2013). Recent project experience, however, shows that increasing household income, even increasing income to children's caregivers, does not necessarily lead to measurable differences in children's wellbeing (Annan et al., 2013; Brunie et al., 2014).

Economic development projects that do not at least aim to protect children from possible unintended harms risk undermining the long-term sustainability of their positive economic impacts.

In fact, as caregivers prosper, new burdens may be laid upon children. They may be required to do additional work inside and outside the home, either to directly support their caregivers' businesses or to cover domestic work that caregivers no longer have time to do. This could negatively affect children's attendance and performance at school, as well as their recreation time, which is a health aspect of childhood. It might also increase risks associated with reduced adult supervision. This is particularly true when illness in the family, such as HIV and AIDS, strains households' human, social and financial resources.

Poverty tends to be cyclical, which means that the effects of economic development programs on children matter, not only for children now, but for the societies they will be part of as adults. Evidence shows that the younger poor people are when they are economically empowered and equipped, the faster and more effectively they will emerge from poverty (Sinclair et al., 2013). If children are able to emerge from poverty at a young age, they can offer their own children a stronger foundation for future health, education and general wellbeing.

Our best interests are served by economic development programs that maximize benefits and minimize risks to children. If children grow into adults with limited productive ability and limited opportunities, the long-term social and economic costs are potentially huge. Economic development projects that do not at least aim to protect children from possible unintended harms risk undermining the long-term sustainability of their positive economic impacts. Programs need monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that capture direct and indirect outcomes for girls and boys, both in the interest of engaging in ethical development, and in the interest of protecting the sustainability of positive impact.

The Purpose of this Guidance

This document aims to help economic development practitioners who design economic strengthening projects with the particular aim of improving child wellbeing and for others whose aim is poverty alleviation more broadly. The guidance presented is based on the understanding that:

1. **Household economic welfare and child wellbeing are correlated** (Campbell et al., 2010; Akwara et al., 2010);

2. **Early intervention in the lives of children improves their outcomes** (US Government, 2010; Alderman, 2012), and

3. **Improving child wellbeing reduces the likelihood they will live in poverty throughout their lives, thereby interrupting the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next** (PEPFAR, 2012).

Adherence to this guidance will therefore enable practitioners to protect children and expand their projects' impacts by incorporating child-level indicators into their M&E systems. It is intended for project directors, team leaders and chiefs of party who design and implement programs, and M&E professionals who design and implement M&E systems for these programs. It builds on the following recommendations for practitioners from the 2013 publication, *Why Measuring Child-Level Impacts Can Help Achieve Lasting Economic Change:*

+ **Plan for child-level monitoring from the outset.** Beginning with project design, assess and monitor how project activities may positively and negatively affect children. This helps ensure that the program is maximizing benefit to the next generation, and is doing no harm. At project start-up, allow time to develop a thoughtful approach that will lead to appropriate and useful monitoring.

+ **Incorporate local definitions of success.** Engage direct and indirect participants, as well as local staff and researchers early in the design of monitoring systems to enable a shared vision of success, as well as an understanding of potential harm, and pinpoint indicators that are locally relevant and complement those commonly used across programs.

+ **Collaborate with local organizations.** Identify local universities, research firms, NGOs, social workers and other groups with the expertise and capacity to undertake data collection with children.

The framework put forward in this document familiarizes economic development practitioners with some common domains of child wellbeing and how economic development and M&E practitioners might monitor and recognize instances of potential harm to children. It provides short examples of how economic development projects that benefit adults can have inadvertent negative consequences for children. It presents a range of options for creating "child-sensitive" M&E systems that help projects identify whether their activities might be putting children at risk.

The framework also offers advice for practitioners who are interested in taking an economic development approach that actively, though indirectly, aims to improve child wellbeing in clients' households. The guidance on preventing harm through child-sensitive M&E systems also applies to these "child-focused" projects; we further present suggestions about how such projects can approach measuring their intended benefits to children.

U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity

The Action Plan on Children in Adversity is a framework that provides strategic guidance for U.S. international assistance for children. The plan is based on the evidence that failure to invest in children can harm social and economic progress. The plan strives to integrate best practices into international assistance initiatives for child wellbeing. The action plan is composed of three primary objectives and three supporting objectives outlined below. Objective three focuses on protecting children and is of particular importance to this guidance document.

Primary Objectives

1. Build strong beginnings. Support comprehensive programs that promote sound development of children by integrating health, nutrition, and family support.
2. Put family care first. Support and enable families to care for their children, prevent unnecessary family-child separation and promote appropriate family care.
3. Protect Children. Prevent, respond to, and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

Supporting Objectives

1. Strengthen child welfare and protection systems. Support partners to build and strengthen holistic and integrated models to promote the best interests of the child.
2. Promote evidence-based policies and programs
3. Integrate this Plan within U.S. Government Departments and Agencies.

(United States Government, 2012)

FRAMEWORK

The framework is intended to help economic development practitioners thoughtfully consider, integrate and operationalize child-sensitive M&E practices. It describes promising practices, but it does not prescribe specific indicators, tools or approaches.

One reason the framework is not prescriptive is because potential harms and benefits to children depend strongly on local context. Like adults, children live within a network of systems. Their families have particular dynamics. So do their schools. So do the communities they live in and the larger entities, like legal systems, that they may interact with. Local realities will drive many project decisions, and children, their caregivers and communities should help define and prioritize child-sensitive measures and measurement tools for the project's monitoring system and evaluation design.

A key assumption is that a skilled M&E expert will be involved in logframe development and design the M&E systems with support from the target beneficiary community and project staff.

The framework walks practitioners through the process of creating child-sensitive program processes, including: how to think about children in a project logframe; how to engage with children, their caregivers and communities about defining child wellbeing; and how children should contribute to the logframe's description of how project activities might affect them. The framework also defines common child wellbeing indicators and guides the design of appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems to collect and analyze the data, interpret the results and use them to refine activities and document results. References are provided throughout. **A key assumption is that a skilled M&E expert will be involved in logframe development and design the M&E systems with support from the target beneficiary community and project staff.**

Strong M&E systems are extremely important to advancing the state of practice. Another reason that the framework can suggest but not prescribe is that there is currently little evidence about economic development projects' effects on child wellbeing. A critical need exists for project staff to measure, document and report on how they see children's lives changing, and whether they have reason to believe that project activities are affecting these changes. Outputs from well-designed M&E systems can make important contributions to learning about what works in the field, and provide crucial context to enhance and expand on external impact assessment findings.

TERMINOLOGY

For the purpose of clarity and common understanding, we provide a few definitions. For example, although we refer to logical framework (or logframe), practitioners may be using results framework or causal model. Though they are not exactly the same, they may be used similarly by a project team to map pathways between activities and outcomes for a variety of groups.

Causal model: Describes the project's expected changes and the pathways through which the changes occur.

Child labor: Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development (ILO, 2014). The UN has established thresholds for child labor at the following levels: age 5–11 years: engaged in any economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week; age 12–14: at least 14 hours of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week; age 15–17: at least 43 hours of economic or domestic work per week (UNICEF, 2014).

Child protection: The protection of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children (Child Protection Working Group, 2012).

Economic Development: Includes meso- and macro-level activities in addition to economic strengthening interventions.

Evaluation: Project evaluation conducted by the implementer or by someone on the implementer's behalf to measure changes in outcomes among the target population; distinct from impact evaluation, which is typically conducted by a third party.

Impact: The long-term goals and/or effects of projects. Impact evaluation includes a counterfactual to compare what changes occurred with what would have occurred had there been no intervention.

Learning System: Consists of the use of monitoring data, evaluation findings and tacit knowledge of staff and stakeholders to create meaning.

Logical Framework: Logframe for short, a tool that identifies what the project is intended to achieve (objectives) through activities and their outputs, and how this achievement, defined as outcomes, will be measured (indicators).

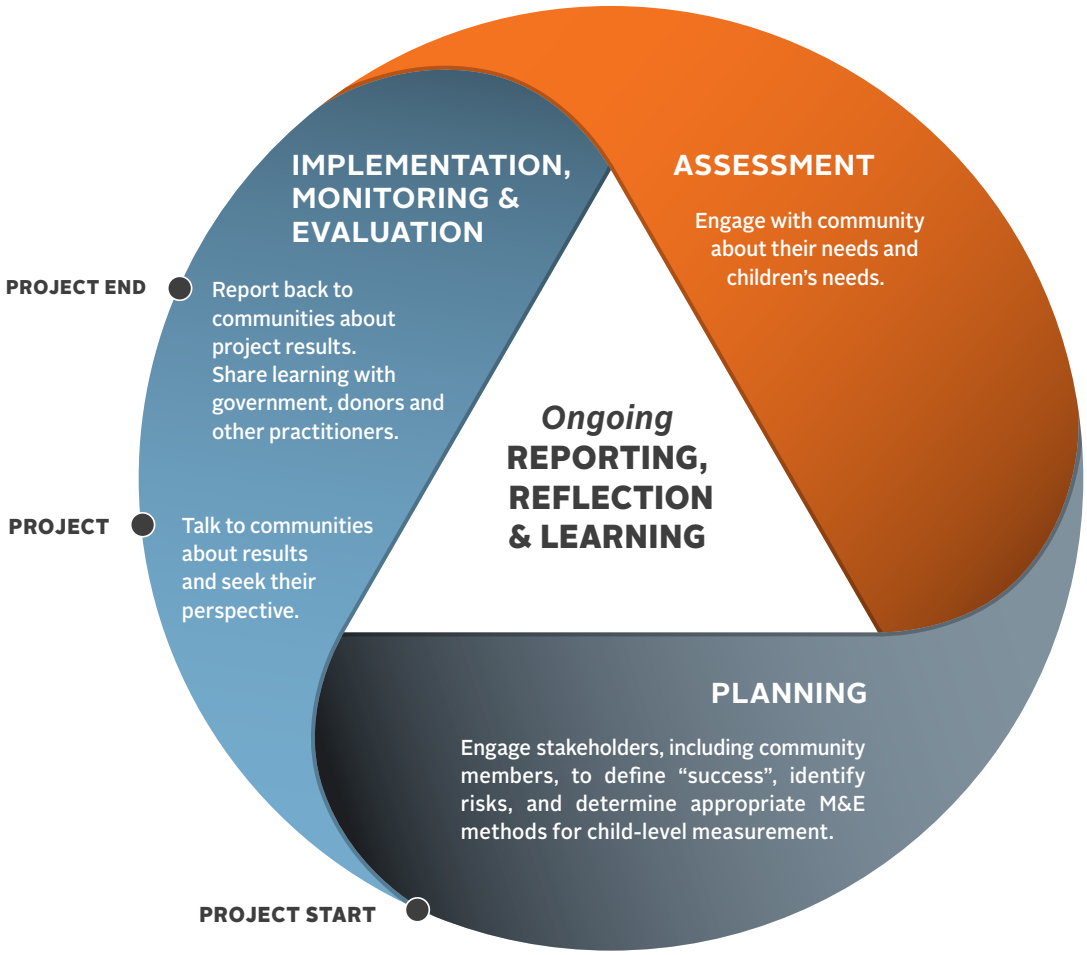
Monitoring: Systematic and routine collection of information to learn from experience and improve practices, redirect activities, make informed decisions and provide accountability.

Outcome: Short- and medium-term program effects, e.g., changes in what others do, as influenced by project's outputs (Bamberger et al., 2006); typically measured by the project's own evaluations.

LEARNING CYCLE

Before launching into the framework, it would help to be clear about some assumptions, especially about learning. The following graphic presents one way in which to envision the learning cycle. As the flow of the circle depicts, learning is iterative. It is based largely on information from the project monitoring system and evaluation. It should also include staff and stakeholders' tacit knowledge, which is depicted in the middle: ongoing reporting, reflection and learning. Although tacit knowledge is difficult to capture from project stakeholders, it is part of how we understand and interpret the world, which is the reason it is so important to acknowledge it and use it. One way to do so is to co-interpret results, as they are available, with the project's community.

Figure 1: Child-Level M&E and the Project Cycle



Adapted from http://aea365.org/blog/stephanie-evergreen-on-scott-chaplowes-fab-five-reboot/

At the **initial assessment** stage, ask the community about their concerns for children and how children might be affected by the activities the project is proposing. At the **planning stage**, include children in the discussion about how they might be affected, both positively and negatively. **Monitor** children throughout the project and consider **evaluating** child-level outcomes on key indicators the community defined. Discuss monitoring results periodically with the community. This results in two complementary opportunities: to give information to the community that has taken the time to provide information, which shows respect, and through the engagement, to co-interpret the results, which improves findings. Engaging the community early will ground the project, making it more effective and increasing its impact by co-defining needs, responses to needs and success.

A project community may include local leaders, organizations, firms, government entities, children and their caregivers. Throughout the framework, we will refer to a project community as including children as direct or indirect project beneficiaries. Some members of these groups likely are already included in the project community during all of the phases outlined above.

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Including Children in the Project's Logframe

Including Children in the Project's Logframe

A logframe helps a project identify pathways that describe how change is expected to happen for various stakeholders. For example, the project facilitates filling a need for transportation in a growing value chain system, leading people to find work as drivers, shipping organizers, mechanics and so forth. The pathway describes how the intervention affects a group of people and what the outcomes will be for them, in this case, getting jobs, which is expected to increase household income, leading to improved household resilience and reducing poverty. Logframes typically focus on direct beneficiaries, but also provide an opportunity to consider how project activities could affect indirect beneficiaries, like children.

A logframe helps a project identify pathways that describe how change is expected to happen for various stakeholders.

To add children to this model, consider how an intervention might affect household resources, such as labor, and responsibilities and dynamics within the household. As adults get more work, there may be an increasing need for someone to care for pre-school age children. In many cases, caregivers turn to older children, often girls, to look after younger children, while caregivers work. This can have a negative impact on the girl children who may be removed from school and become isolated from their peers. Practitioners see the long-term effects of not finishing school, for example, when designing interventions to help vulnerable women, who themselves did not finish high school, find ways to be productive adults and support their households, and still be available to care for their children. At the same time, the project might also hypothesize that the increased income will enable households to send more children to school and afford more and/or higher quality food for the household, which might improve child health.

Be open to opportunities to positively affect children, in addition to avoiding or mitigating harm. For example, the program succeeds at improving household economic welfare, but monitoring data report no improvement in child nutrition. Share this information with the community in which the project is working, and together interpret the results and determine how to use them. This process is a valuable feedback loop within the learning cycle. In this example, the community might acknowledge that though they grow a variety of crops, they do not know what combination of them would result in better nutrition (and therefore growth) for the children. A small effort on the project's part to assist the community to learn about child nutrition can create tremendous sustainable impact.

Even projects that do not target children directly should aim to understand and mitigate or avoid inadvertent harm to children through child-sensitive M&E systems. Construct a logframe that includes protecting children. This section contains two sample logframes that may be used as a guide. Keep in mind the following guidelines for developing a child-sensitive logframe:

+ **Make the process of identifying causal pathways, success and potential negative outcomes inclusive and participatory.** Children, caregivers and community participation are important in defining what constitutes wellbeing, what aspects are most important in their context and how to measure them.

+ **Encourage both girls and boys to participate in M&E processes.** Some contexts might require holding separate groups for boys/men and girls/women, so that they can freely share.

+ **Ask girls and boys what success and wellbeing would look like to them** to help identify appropriate indicators.

Explore Project Risks and Rewards to Better Understand Impact

Under the AIMS project, USAID/Uganda commissioned an impact evaluation of three microfinance programs in Uganda. All the projects offered individual loans to clients through group guarantees and required clients to save. The evaluation found that, in the two-year evaluation period, the programs were successful in reaching moderately poor and vulnerable non-poor clients; clients experienced greater enterprise growth and increase in net revenue and greater household asset accumulation than non-client households.

The evaluation found an interesting mix of results on children's education. Clients were significantly more likely than non-clients to report increased expenditures on schooling, and were more likely to support children who were not household members. However, approximately 20% of the evaluation sample population had to withdraw at least one child from school for at least one term within the evaluation period. Though client households withdrew fewer children on average (1.31 children per household versus 1.43 per non-client household), and most children who withdrew did return to school, a lower percentage of children from client households returned to school: 58% versus 72% from non-client households. The evaluation did not explore why this might have happened. Although this was not a statistically significant result, it is an interesting trend. Project monitoring for effects on child wellbeing would want to examine results like these more deeply. There could be valuable learning about potential risk factors to children as well as unexpected education benefits for children outside client households (Barnes et al., 2001).

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES AND LOGFRAMES

The following case studies and logframes illustrate two theoretical project cases of child-sensitive M&E: 1) a value chain project that does not aim for specific child-level outcomes and 2) a child-focused savings group project that does intend to benefit children. The case studies are informed by existing practice but are not drawn directly from actual projects. They focus on decisions related to child-level measurement and do not attempt to describe all project activities.

Case Study 1: A child-sensitive agriculture value chain project

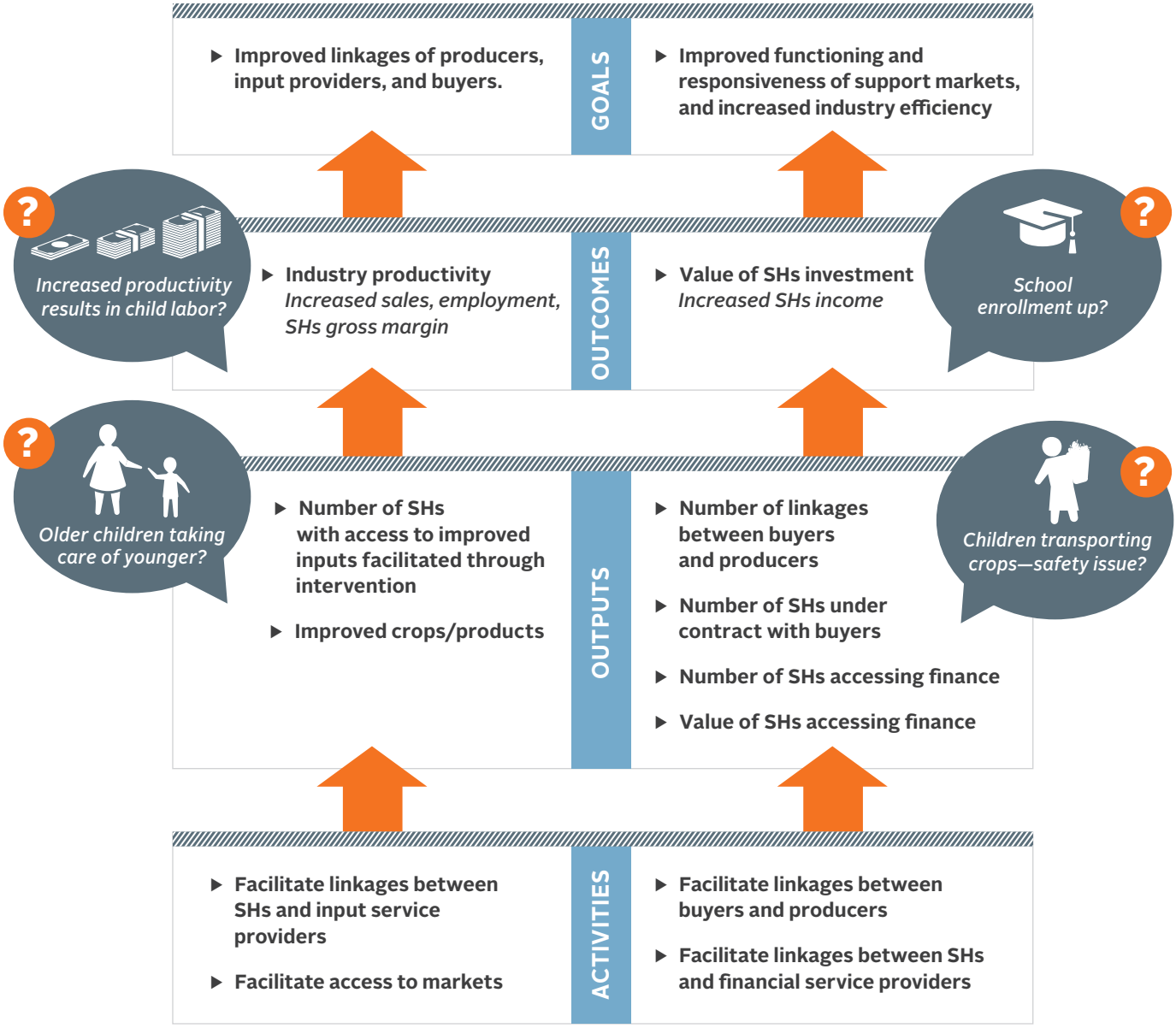
Challenge: Countries whose infrastructure, education, health and social services have been severely damaged as a result of conflict generally struggle to establish effective systems as they rebuild. Eureka is a rural province in a post-conflict country where people have depended heavily on international food aid and services for a number of years. Chronic inefficiencies in the agricultural market contribute significantly to widespread poverty and food insecurity. Children in post-conflict Eureka face challenges such as child labor, lack of education and health care, poor nutrition and separation from caregivers who have migrated in search of work.

Activity: After consultation with the Ministries of Agriculture and Social Welfare, the project design team proposed an agricultural value chain project with child-sensitive M&E systems. The project facilitated the work of locally based agricultural extension officers to provide technical, financial, social and educational support to smallholders (SHs). The project sought to increase production, improve linkages between buyers and producers, add value to products and enhance household income.

Child-sensitive evaluation: In addition to indicators of economic success, the project evaluation plan was to capture household food security, child time-use and school enrollment. The project engaged a research firm with prior experience in child research to conduct participatory rapid appraisals (PRAs) with the children of the beneficiaries as part of their baseline, midterm and endline evaluation activities. These PRAs focused on how children were spending their time, and provided a source to cross-check information obtained from children's caregivers and school records.

Child-sensitive monitoring: Although the value chain activity enabled SHs to increase efficiency, improve linkages to markets and generate income from improved crop yields, special care was taken to regularly check whether children were exposed to child labor. The gendered division of labor means boys might be subjected to different types of work than girls; and as such, child labor might take place on the farms, at markets or in homes. With this

Figure 2: Sample Child-Sensitive Value Chain Logframe



SHs=Smallholders

awareness in the forefront of the team's mind, monitoring indicators attempted to capture child time use and school attendance. By doing so, the project could be certain it was either not contributing to an increase in child labor or child endangerment through harmful labor, but that if monitoring exposed such cases, project staff would follow the appropriate protocols to mitigate against harm. On site visits, extension officers documented information such as who performed different tasks on the farm, in the household and in markets. They gathered information through conversations with beneficiaries and value chain stakeholders, and through personal observation. School enrollment and attendance records were periodically checked with school principals to see if project beneficiaries' children were in school regularly.

Sharing Learning: At midterm, the project team observed that, despite improvements in participants' farm production and increased sales, children were still at risk for child labor and missing school. They discussed results with project stakeholders and learned that households still struggled with providing sufficient food, due to the high cost of certain staples. The project has not yet had enough time to raise participants' incomes to the point where purchasing these staples is a reduced burden, although the trend was encouraging. However, local teachers suggested that a school feeding program might create incentives for parents to send their children to school. The project communicated this message to the Ministry of Education and local child protection organizations. Project staff also convened meetings with value chain stakeholders to discuss whether market-based interventions might be able to affect the supply of staples and make them more affordable. By engaging actively in the project learning cycle, project staff, those gathering information for the project monitoring system and evaluation, and members of the community touched by the project were able to take advantage of opportunities resulting from the regular monitoring, as well as the evaluation.

Case Study 2: A child-focused savings group plus (SG+) project

Challenge: In the communities of Ruralia province, a majority of people eke out a living as subsistence farmers. Productivity is often low in these areas, and the recurring threat of natural disasters adds to their vulnerability. Many households experience extended periods of hunger between seasonal harvests. During the hunger season, prices in the markets increase and household purchasing power is markedly diminished. Children in the province, especially those under the age of 5, are in many cases chronically malnourished (or stunted), acutely malnourished (wasted) and underweight due to caregivers' inability to provide sufficient food and lack of knowledge about how to provide a nutritious diet.

Activity: The project design team decided to use a Savings Group "Plus" approach to strengthen and stabilize household purchasing power through savings groups (SGs), plus a complementary nutrition education program to address the local information gap about how to provide a healthy, varied diet.

Child-focused evaluation: Since this project actively seeks to improve child wellbeing, the design team researched specific indicators related to the targeted outcomes, specifically child nutrition. The team chose to direct project resources toward improving the nutrition of children under 2 years old, since discussions with nutrition experts revealed that this is a critical age for affecting children's growth and development, and thereby, their health. The project gave a preference to the Feed the Future indicators to be able to compare their results with other programs, so they chose as their primary child-level outcome indicator the prevalence of children 6–23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet (RiA). Children under 6 months are omitted because recent reports on health and nutrition by the country's national statistics agency confirmed that the practice of exclusively breastfeeding infants for 6 months is widespread in Ruralia, and, therefore, children under 6 months do not eat solid food.

In addition, on the evaluation design, the project included standard household welfare indicators that are known to correlate with child wellbeing outcomes, like the structure of the house (walls, floors, roof), access to and use of water source(s) and sanitation. The evaluation design team spoke to local NGOs and village leaders to understand what common building and sanitation practices are, and what improvements local people aspire to obtain. The project also tracks family demographics that answer key questions about child welfare, including who the child's caregivers are and what level of education they have, since these are known to be linked with child welfare. In addition, the project's evaluation is measuring changes in household economic welfare, which they have operationalized, including household expenditures and ownership of productive and unproductive assets.

While the evaluation includes child-level outcomes and information provided by children is highly valuable, children are not included as direct respondents in this case because the key outcome is nutrition for under 2-year olds. Therefore, information about what children eat must be obtained from the primary person responsible for preparing food for children and feeding them. The project hired a local survey firm to collect baseline data from the households. Interviews were undertaken with both the head of household and spouse, and if necessary, anyone else who made decisions about food purchases and preparation. The project is considering conducting some in-depth interviews with a sample of households to better understand how decisions about food and nutrition are made. These interviews would help the project to understand whether and how relationships within the house and who has spending authority (or relative spending authority) affect what food children ultimately receive.

Figure 3: Sample Child-Focused Savings Groups Plus (SG+) Logframe

Community is used to describe the people, organizations, physical communities, public institutions that may have a stake in or be affected by project intervention.

SG = Savings Groups

Child-focused monitoring: To better understand if SG participants understand and use what they learned from the nutrition education, the project is monitoring who attends the training, as well as who says they are following the nutrition guidelines given in the training. The first – who attends the training – is tracked by the project staff. The latter – who reports changing the way children are fed based on information from the nutrition education program – is being monitored by local women's groups. These groups are part of a regional network that supports training provided by community health workers. Women in these groups are trusted community members who know the children and their families. The project provides each of the women with an internet-connected tablet for sending and receiving mobile data. The tablets are then available for personal use. The agreement with the women's group is a memorandum of understanding in which the women's group agreed to systematically monitor SG participants by periodically meeting with them during their regular SG meeting and making unscheduled visits to their homes to ask about food preparation and child nutrition. With these data, the project is calculating the efficacy of the nutrition education.

In addition, since SGs are intended as a means to increase the diversity of income sources or deepen existing investment into microbusinesses (depending upon the household's existing economic wherewithal), the possibility that children might be drawn into child labor inside or outside their households is a concern. Discussions with community leaders, including the village head, school principal, religious leaders and women's group leaders, as well as a select group of parents/caregivers, confirmed that this is indeed a potential risk in Ruralia. To monitor child labor risk, the project engaged a local NGO that has experience working with an international child protection NGO to collect data about how children spend their time. The project sponsored a training the local NGO gave to three youth in each community to collect data from 8- to 17-year-olds to track how they spend their time. The project itself receives the data and does the analysis to determine whether children are engaged in child labor as defined by the United Nations. The youth gain training, experience and a small stipend to help them with school fees.

The project is also tracking the availability of food in each of the project communities. Project staff gather this information by visiting community markets (when they are in the community that day) on market days and by asking a variety of project participants and local leaders about food availability on a regular basis. The project tracks this information and analyzes it by season to determine if there are any crop failures, weather changes, etc., that are affecting access to food for project participants and their communities, which would then make it more difficult for families to provide nutritious food for their children.

COMMON MEASURES OF CHILD WELLBEING

Indicators help show how much change took place—both positive and negative change. Regular monitoring helps the project make corrections along the way. Indicators should be aligned with locally determined priorities and needs. Although programs do not generally collect all of the following data, this list is meant to help prioritize which outcomes along the project's causal pathway to measure, and the resources available to help do it. Working collaboratively with stakeholders can help prioritize child themes and determine which indicators are most appropriate for the project.

To monitor the children of project-related households, identify and partner with a child-focused local organization. Negotiate an agreement with the local organization and provide the staff with training in appropriate child-friendly data collection methods. Also consider providing data-collection devices that they can retain post-project, e.g., tablet, smart phone or computer, as incentive to collect high-quality data for the project, and build their capacity to fulfill their mission.

Some common domains of child wellbeing include:[1]

1. **Physical wellbeing**—health status, nutrition, safety
2. **Education**—enrolled and attending school, satisfaction with school
3. **Psychological wellbeing**—self-esteem, assertiveness, future aspirations
4. **Social wellbeing**—interpersonal skills, time to play and be creative with and without peers/others
5. **Family context**—family demographics, dependable nurturing relationships with adult caregivers

1 Modified from Ben-Arieh (2000) and Lee, B. J (2014).

The child wellbeing literature is rich with over 100 domains and many definitions of child wellbeing (see for example Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). The domains and indicators in this guide are effective in developing country contexts.

Carefully define child-level indicators with the age group of children in mind. Obvious age groups include pre-school-aged children and school-aged children. Select appropriate data collection techniques with the children's age in mind. Children as young as 6 may directly participate in providing information about themselves with caregiver consent, child assent and appropriate child-friendly methods. Data collection plans should be reviewed by an ethical review board, preferably in the country in which the work is being done. The review board, sometimes called an institutional review board (IRB), is responsible for determining if the data collection is human subjects research. If the board determines that your work is human subjects research, then it will review all tools and provide feedback, as well as approval to collect and use the data.

M&E Methods and Resources by Child Wellbeing Domain

Child Wellbeing Domains to Consider for Your Project	*Some Recommended Methods & Resources*	*Resource Intensity*
1. PHYSICAL		
Food Security & nutrition, e.g., Availability of adequate food every day and appropriate nutrition for age **Health**, e.g., Incidence and treatment of common illnesses, access to health care, immunizations. **Safety**, e.g., Self-reported violence against children, use of services by child victims, adults' attitudes toward violence against children, harmful labor	Records	Low
	Discuss with community leaders, including those with whom children interact	Low
	Participatory activities with children	Medium–high
	Household survey: Hunger Scale, Household Food Insecurity Access Scale, Household Dietary Diversity See the WHO's "Indicators for assessing infant and young children feeding practices" Access some of these Monitoring & Evaluation tools from the FANTA project	Medium-high depending on detail, location, sensitivity to questions
2. EDUCATION		
School enrollment, attendance, school completion/diploma, education expenditures, child satisfaction with school and school environment	School records	Low
	Household survey	Medium
	Participatory activities with children by appropriate age grouping	Medium
	Child observation	High
3. PSYCHOLOGICAL		
Child aspirations, self-esteem, assertiveness	Interviews with children, participatory activities with children	Medium–high depending on context, e.g., some children may need psychological support as a result of issues arising from data-gathering activity
4. SOCIAL		
Interpersonal skills, connectedness to peers	Interviews with family, teachers, community leaders	Low–medium
	Participatory activities	Medium–high
	Child Observation	High
5. FAMILY CONTEXT		
Family demographics (e.g., child lives with two biological or adoptive caregivers), child-caregiver relationship, caregiver education level	Household survey	Low
	Observation	Low
	Interview children	Medium–high
6. COMMUNITY CONTEXT		
Social support, adults children can go to with their problems, child as active community member	Community and youth participatory activities	Medium
	Social network maps	High

ENGAGING LOCAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Even when monitoring at the minimum "do no harm" level, gathering information from and about children may reveal highly sensitive information about children's lives.

Working with local partners is extremely valuable to projects that seek to protect children from harm or improve children's wellbeing. Talking to local organizations that are already engaged in areas like child protection, child rights and child participation can help orient the project to the particular risks children face in the operating environment that the project might enhance or mitigate. They can also ensure that the project staff can recognize cases of abuse, exploitation and neglect that they may discover in the course of implementation and refer those involved based on existing mechanisms.

We recommend going beyond discussions with local child-focused organizations to partnering with appropriate organizations for project monitoring and evaluation. Even when monitoring at the minimum "do no harm" level, gathering information from and about children may reveal highly sensitive information about children's lives. The data collection process carries risks for children, and an experienced local partner will likely be better positioned than project staff to mitigate those risks. Look for partners with experience working directly with children. One positive indicator in a potential partner is staff with social work backgrounds. Partner knowledge of research ethics for vulnerable populations is another. Partners or leads to identifying partners may be found by talking to local leaders, the national ministries for social welfare and education, community social workers, community service providers who engage with children (teachers, police, health care workers) and universities or research institutes (World Vision International, 2012).

Being Aware of Potential Harms

The Population Council implemented a project in Kenya and Uganda called Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Girls (SSSPVG), which furnished adolescent girls in urban areas with individual savings accounts and linked them to the Council's Safe Spaces model, which provides girls with a physical "safe space" in their community, peer support groups, and an older female mentor from their community. Group meetings in the safe spaces were used to conduct savings activities and provide training on financial education and health.

A program delivery error in Uganda led to some girls receiving only the savings program, and not the accompanying Safe Spaces interventions. The evaluation in Uganda, therefore, had three groups: girls who received both savings accounts and Safe Spaces interventions; girls who received the savings accounts alone; and the comparison group, which received neither intervention. At endline, *only* the savings alone group reported an increase in gender-based violence. In particular, girls in this group reported higher incidence of indecent touching by someone of the opposite sex and higher incidence of teasing from people of the opposite sex. The evaluation report does not theorize about why this is the case, but this finding highlights the need for attention to potential risks to youth and children in economic development interventions.

(Austrian & Muthengi, 2014)

Conversations about Child Wellbeing with Local Partners

Here are some discussion ideas to engage local stakeholders around child protection and wellbeing issues and needs:

+ The types of problems children are facing.
+ The source of the problems.
+ Whether the problem is widespread or localized.
+ The steps/actions being taken to address children's problems.
+ The organization's role in addressing the needs of children.
+ What more needs to be done to address the problems children face.
+ What are the potential risks and benefits that the project could have for children.
+ Whether there is an interest/opportunity for a partnership.
+ Referrals to other local stakeholders with child-focused agendas.

Ethical Data Collection and Review

A summary of ethical guidelines for information gathering include the following:

+ Collect only necessary and justified data and information.
+ Design the activity to get accurate information.
+ Consult with community members, including children.
+ Anticipate all possible consequences, including negative ones.
+ Be sensitive to children's specific needs with regard to consent and interviewing procedures.
+ Clarify the activity's limits to stakeholders and communicate next steps.

(Schenk & Williamson, 2005)

ENGAGING CAREGIVERS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

This participatory process is systemic in nature and can help build activities that foster economic development while avoiding unintended harm that may be associated with participating in your program.

Although collecting data on child-level indicators is essential, children are a part of families and communities—the context that must also be considered when designing M&E systems for the project. Engaging women, girls, boys and men to help strategize appropriate indicators will help project staff better understand the context in which child wellbeing is or is not enabled, and identify risks for children. This participatory process is systemic in nature and can help build activities that foster economic development while avoiding unintended harm that may be associated with participating in your program.

When interacting with these key project stakeholders, the project will likely work with community leaders, adults and children to discuss and address inequitable and harmful gender attitudes and practices. This may already be part of the program design and implementation to maximize women's participation in the program, or minimize harm to women from participating in program activities. This process adds boys and girls to the discussion.

ENGAGING CHILDREN

Children's work supports most family businesses, either because they work in those businesses themselves, or because their domestic labor at home enables an adult or older child to work in the family business. Intervening in the local economy means children will be affected, so project staff will need to talk with them. Both direct and indirect beneficiaries' opinions are important when deciding on potential groups the project will target and what success might look like for these groups. This is no less true for children who work inside and outside the home, go to school or experience hunger or abuse. Their experiences shape their ideas of success and inform the contexts in which project benefits play out. As the project or an organization on the project's behalf gathers information about and from children, consider the ways in which children are engaged in the process.

Tools for child-friendly methods of engaging children in M&E include:

+ *How to Consult with OVC and Children at Risk*, in the World Bank OVC Toolkit, 2005.

+ *Children and Participation: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation with Children and Young People*, Save the Children UK, 2000.

+ *Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources*, Population Council & Family Health International, 2005.

+ *Participative Ranking Methodology*, Child Protection in Crisis, 2010.

+ *Time Use PRA Guide and Toolkit for Child and Youth Development Practitioners*, STRIVE Technical Primer, FHI 360, 2013.

Ensuring that the project logframe is child-sensitive is the critical first step to protecting and promoting children's wellbeing in economic development projects. The next section will help think through the process of translating a child-sensitive logframe into M&E systems that will alert the project to risks and benefits to children, which must be addressed in the design of M&E systems, the training of all staff who may come in contact with children, and implementation of M&E activities.

UN Standards for Child Protection

The Keeping Children Safe Coalition produced a comprehensive set of tools for child protection aimed to help a wide range of organizations keep children safe in developing countries.

Based on eleven standards, these tools offer practical guidance to organizations on what is required to meet their responsibilities to protect children. The toolset is composed of five tools. Tool 1 describes *what* agencies need to do to keep children safe and Tool 2 describes *how* to implement the standards guide. Tools 3,4,5 provide exercises and suggested workshops that help organizations raise awareness and gain the skills and knowledge to better meet their protection responsibilities.

Overview of the Standards

1. A written policy on keeping children safe
2. Putting the policy into practice
3. Preventing harm to children
4. Written guidelines on behavior towards children
5. Meeting the standards in different locations
6. Equal rights of all children to protection
7. Communicating the 'keep children safe' message
8. Education and training to keep children safe
9. Access to advice and support
10. Implementing and monitoring of the standards
11. Working with partners to meet the standards

(Keeping Children Safe Coalition, 2006)

SECTION 3

Monitoring System and Evaluation Design Guidance

Monitoring System and Evaluation Design Guidance

Program M&E professionals should be responsible for designing the monitoring system and evaluation. It is essential, however, for project implementation staff to understand the benefits of M&E to the program going forward, as well as some of the challenges and possible solutions to implementing child-sensitive M&E.

Common to both the monitoring and evaluation processes is the need to understand the **context** in which activities are taking place. Be aware of child safety, what regulations may be in place to protect children, and how they are interpreted and carried out in the program's environment. Knowledge of public services—health clinics, roads, financial services, water and sanitation—is also important, since availability of and accessibility to these services affects children, caregivers and communities. Interpreting program impact within this context will improve understanding of the program's reach and impact, which will enable the program to more effectively communicate those impacts to the community, the donor, government officials and policymakers.

Interpreting program impact within this context will improve understanding of the program's reach and impact, which will enable the program to more effectively communicate those impacts to the community, the donor, government officials and policymakers.

What distinguishes monitoring from evaluation is mainly the **time frame** in which each occurs and **who carries it out.** Monitoring tracks indicators that may change in a year or less. General questions to ask include:

+ Is change happening slower or faster than the project anticipated?
+ How is the pace of change in the economic environment affecting caregivers and children?
+ Are beneficiaries and beneficiary children able to remain stable on the outcomes of interest while others lose ground in a worsening economy? How and why?
+ Are there unanticipated negative consequences that may require changes in implementation?
+ Can the community use project learning to magnify potential improvements for children?

Evaluation looks at the longer term program impacts and outcomes. Questions to ask yourself:

+ Have some intermediary outcomes from the logframe been included in the evaluation design?

+ If something prohibits the change the project sought to achieve, are changes being measured that were expected earlier on the causal pathway that might be more closely examined to see if the changes were adequate for all relevant groups?

Another difference between monitoring and evaluation is **who carries out each task**. Staff responsible for gathering M&E data are generally responsible for monitoring. We realize, however, that in adding indicators that track the effects of economic development on children, the responsible staff may be stretched. One possible solution is to engage local organizations whose mission is child protection and who recognize the benefit of increasing their own capacity in monitoring and gathering data. Staff from faith-based organizations, youth groups or education staff or interns may be good options to help make monitoring visits and collect data, so long as they are well trained in child safeguarding issues and procedures, child-friendly data collection methods and know what to do if faced with an ethical or child-safety issue. Offering incentives like training in data collection and analysis, or providing electronic devices for collecting data, may make a monitoring partnership attractive to local organizations.

Evaluation is usually carried out by an organization or individual outside the program and its partner organizations. Consider the capacity of the organization or individual(s) given the diverse types of data collection modes: quantitative household survey, participatory exercises with adults or communities or children, social network mapping and analysis. Carefully vet those being considered against the project's needs. Consider including a child wellbeing expert on the evaluation team.

Child Protection

See guidance cited in the previous section, and UNICEF's Manual for the Measurement of Indicators of Violence against Children.

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, DOCUMENTING

The baseline assessment of your program should aim to understand the initial wellbeing and vulnerability levels of girls and boys in the program's catchment area and to monitor changes over time. The baseline assessment may include multiple tools like surveys, network mapping and focus groups. As standard practice, data analysis should be disaggregated by sex and age of the child and socioeconomic status. Your project should have an analysis plan for monitoring and evaluation data.

Questions the project should routinely address include:

+ Is the project seeing expected results based on the logframe? How so? How not? Why? Document changes as part of the project's records.

+ Do the pathways with regard to children still make sense? If not, how so? What has changed? Revise the logframe. Document what changes were made and why they were needed.

+ Is the project seeing positive changes? If yes, document them.

Planning the Analysis

+ **If the project was required to produce a monitoring and evaluation plan and indicator reference sheets, then the project already has an analysis plan, at least with regard to each indicator.**

+ **Keep in mind the iterative nature of learning and how we tend to pay attention to what we measure.**

+ **Make learning part of the project culture by setting aside time at regular intervals with space to take advantage of ad hoc opportunities as they present themselves.**

+ **Document, document, document. See examples of how to approach M&E data and analysis:**

  - Gathering, Managing and Communication Information in IFAD's Managing for Impact in Rural Development: A Guide for Project M&E. http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/6/Section_6-2DEF.pdf

  - UNDP's Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. Section 4.3 Monitor: Collection of data, analysis and reporting. http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/ch4-3.html

  - USAID Guidelines on Monitoring and Evaluation Planning. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadq477.pdf

  - ADS Chapter 203 Assessing and Learning. http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/203.pdf

+ Is the project seeing negative changes? If negative changes for children are discovered, engage with the appropriate stakeholders to determine why, and make appropriate adjustments to activities to mitigate the harm. Document lessons learned. Follow local standards and laws for reporting, where necessary.

+ What if the measurements suggest there is no change? In cases where no changes are seen, engage with stakeholders to determine why. Document lessons learned. Should messaging be added or adjusted to help align activities and their results with logframe expectations? Determine with the community what could be done and manage expectations appropriately.

+ Share your results with stakeholders, whether positive, negative or no changes. Sharing with communities can help them take action to improve the likelihood of improving child wellbeing. At the very least, the project will have provided the community with valuable information on which they can make decisions.

There is a common theme throughout this process—engage, learn, design, take action, measure/study, learn through engagement, document, improve design, document, take action. Make not only the results known, but how they were achieved, measured, and interpreted. Learn from the learning process and document that too. Impact will increase. Stakeholders will be gratified by the project's impact, collaborative learning processes, and documentation.

Share!

As noted earlier in this guidance, we have much to learn about the effects of economic development projects on children. Please share what the project learns about how economic development programs affect children by sending project documentation to learning repositories such as the Children, Youth and Economic Strengthening (CYES) Network Learning Platform, in addition to individual project, organization, and donor websites. CYES aims to build a body of knowledge on effective economic development programming that both directly and indirectly supports child and youth wellbeing.

By including children in logframes and M&E, and sharing results widely, we can improve the practice and impact of economic development projects. By understanding what is happening to children in our project environments, ensuring that our projects do no harm to children, and improving child wellbeing, we can help strengthen the gains our projects make today and provide the foundation for future growth.

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Tools and Resources

Austrian, K. & Ghati, D. (2010). Girl-Centered Program Design: A Toolkit to Develop, Strengthen and Expand Adolescent Girls Programs. Population Council. Retrieved from http://www.popcouncil.org/research/girl-centered-program-design-a-toolkit-to-develop-strengthen-and-expand-ado

See chapters on monitoring and evaluation. Of particular use to some programs may be the sample questions at the end of the evaluation chapter on assets: social, human, financial and physical.

Children and Economic Strengthening Programs: Maximizing Benefits and Minimizing Harm. (2013). CPC Livelihoods and Economic Strengthening Task Force.

Children, Youth and Economic Strengthening (CYES) Network and Learning Platform. http:/www.seepnetwork.org/children--youth-and-economic-strengthening-pages-20202.php

The CYES Network is a Learning Platform dedicated to improving the lives of children through effective economic strengthening programming. It provides a reliable source of information on the latest resources and opportunities; and showcases the innovations and learning of CYES-focused organizations and programs.

Child Protection in Crisis. (2010). *Participative Ranking Methodology*. Retrieved from http://www.cpcnetwork.org/research/methodology/participative-ranking-methodology/

Participative Ranking Methodology (PRM) utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to promote an engaged and participatory process that can generate rich, contextualized data for deeper analysis.

CRS and American Red Cross. (2008). *Guidelines on Monitoring and Evaluation Planning*. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadq477.pdf

FANTA III. *Monitoring and Evaluation*. Retrieved from http://www.fantaproject.org/monitoring-and-evaluation

FANTA III helps to determine M&E best practices and policies and provide detailed guidance on complex M&E technical activities, both at the global level and directly to national and local governments. Notably, FANTA is responsible for the development of several food security and nutrition indicators that can be used to rigorously and credibly support programmatic decision making, systematic learning, and documentation of program effectiveness.

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The rules apply to everyone, not just researchers. For more information about ethical data collection, visit Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources. http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/horizons/childrenethics.pdf

Sinclair, M., Carmichael, J., Diener, O. & Rutherford, D. (2013). *Why Measuring Child Level Impacts Can Help Achieve Lasting Economic Change*. Retrieved from http://www.fhi360.org/resource/why-measuring-child-level-impacts-can-help-achieve-lasting-economic-change

This technical brief provides the evidence to date on the impact of economic strengthening interventions on child wellbeing and argues that economic strengthening programs should systemically monitor and evaluate at the child-level. Among other things, it draws attention to the fact that monitoring of child-level outcomes is essential to assure that programs are doing no harm and serves as the impetus behind this guide.

STRIVE Technical Primer, FHI 360. (2013). Time Use PRA Guide and Toolkit for Child and Youth Development Practitioners. Retrieved from http://www.microlinks.org/library/time-use-pra-guide-and-toolkit-child-and-youth-development-practitioners

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UNICEF. *Manual for the Measurement of Indicators of Violence against Children*, http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/Manual%20Indicators%20UNICEF.pdf

USAID. (2012). *ADS Chapter 203 Assessing and Learning*. Retrieved from http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/203.pdf

World Bank OVC Toolkit. (2005). *How to Consult with OVC and Children at Risk*. Retrieved from http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/164047/index.htm

The OVC Toolkit is a practical and insightful guide that contains instructions, recommendations and a wide range of strategies and mechanisms that are useful to professionals in the fields of economic development, public policy, social work and research, to name a few. Although the focus of the manuscript is on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in sub-Saharan Africa, the information contained in the document transcends geography and bears cross–cultural relevance to other cultures as well as for less vulnerable children in any society.

It provides concrete reasons for engaging with children and guides users to other useful resource material that will help them decide what to do, how to engage stakeholders and how to identify interventions that will benefit children. Additionally, it makes several convincing arguments for the inclusion of children in economic development using well developed logic grounded in human rights, social capital and the cost of inaction.

World Health Organization (2010). *Indicators for Assessing Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices, Part 2 Measurement*. Retrieved from http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241599290_eng.pdf

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